

Belmont Vision 21 Implementation Committee

Minutes for the Meeting of May 15, 2003

Accepted June 5, 2003

Members present: Jenny Fallon, Joe Greene, Matt Hausmann, Sara Oaklander, Meg O'Brien, Jennifer Page, Barry Winston

Members absent: Tim Higgins, Bill Hofmann, Paul Solomon

Also present: Delores Keefe

1. Jennifer called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.
2. The minutes of meetings held on March 18, April 3, and May 1 were reviewed and approved with no changes. The notes of the meeting held on April 17 were reviewed and accepted.
3. Full alcohol licensing. The committee discussed what role, of any, we would take in preparing for the vote that is expected to take place next April on the question of full alcohol licenses for restaurants. It was agreed that we should be involved in educating the voters regarding the benefits of the initiative, but that other groups -- such as the Chamber of Commerce -- should be involved, as well. In addition, members agreed that it will be important to have citizen participation from all parts of town in order to demonstrate that the initiative has broad based support. Further discussion regarding the role VIC will play in this effort will continue at a future date.
4. Welcome to Belmont booklet. Barry reported on the status of revisions and reprinting of the booklet. Reprinting will have to wait until Fall as the school year at Minuteman Tech is coming to a close. This gives us time to decide whether we will make minor or major revisions to the booklet and who will sponsor the second printing. In general, there seemed to be agreement that major revisions are not necessary. In addition, it was agreed that the realtors would be approached again and, if they are not willing or able to help, we will approach the banking community. Joe Greene reported that the Newcomers group has expressed interest in helping to revise the booklet. Jennifer asked all VIC members to review the booklet and submit corrections and/or additions to Barry. Eventually, all VIC members will be asked to participate in checking the accuracy of the phone numbers listed in the booklet.
5. Public Information and Communications Planning Group. Meg O'Brien reported on the activities to date of this group. Among other things, the group is looking at the various ways that the Town communicates with residents and vice versa, and identifying related issues and problems; working on expanding its membership, including identifying some potential new members through the town's volunteer interest survey; and preparing for a presentation to the Board of Selectmen.

6. Newcomers Group. Joe Greene reported on the status of this group. The group is working on membership and establishing a schedule of meetings for May - July. They are also working on a flyer, which they expect to post throughout town, soliciting ideas and suggestions.
7. Business and Economic Development Planning Group. Sara reported on the current activities of BEDPG subgroups. One is working on a town wide survey of residents in an attempt to define what it means when we refer to “desirable” new businesses, as well as to capture other information from residents regarding their vision for Belmont’s business districts. Another is working to launch an initiative to begin a dialogue with property owners and developers. The business advocacy group is beginning to explore issues related to the support of existing businesses in Belmont. The issues of trash and snow removal have not been addressed yet due to the lack of a leader in that area, but it may be possible to fold those issues into the work of the business advocacy group.
8. Business Friendly Recommendations. Jennifer reminded committee members that we had agreed to revisit the recommendations we made to the BOS and the time has come. Jennifer will email the eight recommendations to members and asked that we all take a look at them and send her our feedback regarding what we perceive to be the status of each.
9. Conference on Sustainable Communities. Jenny reported on this conference that was attended by Jennifer, Paul and Jenny. The conference was sponsored by the Massachusetts Climate Action Network. Representatives from various communities talked about environmentally sustainable community planning, specifically development of Climate Action Plans.

A key point made at the conference is that if a community wants to really make a difference with regard to environmental impact and climate conditions, it has to work to change the behavior of residents. Looking just to the behavior of the town itself isn’t enough (although it does set a good example).

Various public relations campaigns are being used in other communities to produce/promote sustainable behavior (e.g., the “See the Light” campaign to use energy efficient light bulbs).

10. Next Steps on the Environmental Initiative. Jennifer and Jenny led a discussion on what needs to happen to move this initiative along. The plan is to next consult with other town groups and departments to find out their thoughts and activities. What are they already doing to be environmentally responsible? Are there cost savings as a result?

The goal will be to document what the town is already doing with regard to becoming an environmentally responsible community. We will be looking at all areas of the

town and its residents, including town government, town committees, individuals, groups and organizations in town, and so on. Based on this, we will be able to determine the next steps we as a town might want to take to move us further along in this direction.

The Committee discussed various ways to organize the process of gathering the desired input. It was agreed to hold a series of three meetings to which the relevant groups would be invited to send representatives. The meetings will be a series of orchestrated conversations to find out what people are doing and thinking about these issues. Eventually, we will be able to share what we've learned, perhaps in the context of one open public meeting where we present what we've learned and further discuss next steps. Members expressed the importance of not overlooking any group or individuals who should be included.

Before tonight's meeting, Paul Solomon generated some questions that might be used to initiate conversation among the folks who come together. Jennifer asked group to take a look and then to suggest additional questions that would generate discussion.

As a result of that discussion, the following questions and ideas were generated:

- What is your department, organization, club or group doing in the area of environmental preservation and/or energy conservation? Have there been cost savings or other benefits?
- What are you aware of other groups doing?
- Do you know of similar efforts in other communities?
- Do you know of any source of information and/or resources at the state and/or federal level? in the corporate sector? among foundations?
- Has your group done any public education or outreach around these initiatives? If so, what and how? Was it successful?
- Do you already have ideas and/or plans for things you want to pursue in this area?
- What information and resources do you know about and what information and resources do you wish you had access to?
- What do you think the most effective path would be for the town to take in this area? (The group defined "effective" as environmentally friendly, cost savings, likely to get buy-in and agreed that this should be the last question.)

A discussion ensued regarding timing. Jenny Fallon agreed to pull these questions together and draft a letter of invitation by next week. A schedule of meetings was proposed, as follows:

June 5 - VIC meeting schedule but it's too soon for the first session so cancel.
June 12 - first session
June 19 - cancel scheduled VIC meeting due to Town Meeting that week
June 26 - second session
July 10 - third session

11. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Oaklander, Secretary Pro Tem